

HABITAT CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

for the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

A **regular meeting** of the Habitat Conservation Advisory Committee (HCAC) was held in the Washington City Council Chambers on **April 26, 2016**.

Committee members present were:

Chris Blake, Chairman	Environmental Organization
Chris Hart, Vice Chairman	Local Development
Larry Crist	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Henry Maddux	Utah Dept. of Natural Resources (UDNR)
Marc Mortensen	Citizen-at-Large
John Bramall	Mayors Association
Bob Sandberg	HCP Administrator

Absent and Excused were:

Dawna Ferris-Rowley	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
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Also present were:

Cheyenne Bentley	Washington County Commission – Recorder
Cameron Rognan	Technical Committee (HCP)
Ann McLuckie	Technical Committee (DWR)
Alan Gardner	Washington County Commissioner
Celste Maloy	Washington County Deputy Attorney
Kade Bringhurst	St. George City
Bette Arial	Senator Lee's Office
Julie Applegate	St. George News
Susan Crook	Citizen's for Dixie's Future
Chris Gorzalski	Citizen
Lisa Rutherford	Citizen
Paul Van Dam	Citizen

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Chris Blake called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. noting that a quorum was present and mentioned that Commissioner Gardner had a small introduction to make. Commissioner Gardner then introduced Celeste Maloy who is one of Washington County's Deputy Attorneys. She will be taking Jodi Borgeson's place, as Jodi has accepted another position at the Water Conservancy District.

Henry Maddux stated that an adjustment needed to be made to the March 22, 2016 minutes. On page four (4), in the second paragraph of Confluence Park Property Purchase Update, he requested that 'a division of' be stricken from the sentence.

John Bramall stated that an item needed to be added to the agenda as well. The

Technical Committee Report needed to be added between 6-b and 6-c.

MOTION by John Bramall strike 'a division of' from page four (4) of the March 22, 2016 minutes and to amend the agenda to include the Technical Committee Report.
Seconded by Chris Hart.
Discussion: None.
Motion passed.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda is a means of expediting routine matters which come before the committee for approval. The consent portion of the agenda is approved by one (1) non-debatable motion. If any member wishes to remove an item from the consent portion of the agenda, then that item becomes the first order of business on the regular agenda.

- a. **Approval of Agenda**
- b. **Review and Approve Regular Meeting Minutes**
 - 1. **March 22, 2016**
- c. **Next Meeting Date**
 - 1. **May 24, 2016**

MOTION by Chris Hart to approve the amended Consent Agenda.
Seconded by John Bramall.
Discussion: None.
Vote was taken: All voted aye.
Motion passed.

3. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- a. None.

4. PRESENTATIONS

- a. **Status of Desert Tortoises in the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve- Ann McLuckie**

Ann McLuckie gave a presentation on the status of desert tortoises in the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. She began by expressing gratitude to all the field workers as well as mentioning her appreciation for funding they have received.

Ms. McLuckie went on to speak about population monitoring results. Random transects are selected throughout the Reserve at which point distance sampling is conducted along the transects to estimate the population of tortoises. One hundred and sixty-one (161) transects were conducted in 2015 and it was estimated that there were fifteen (15) tortoises per square kilometer. Population has declined by approximately 50% since the

first study was done in 1999. The decline is attributed to an extreme drought that occurred in 2002 as well as wildfires that occurred in 2005. The population has since stabilized within recent years. Disease has also been observed in the Reserve, with the most common being Upper Respiratory Tract Disease (URTD). Mr. Bramall questioned whether URTD is higher near dirt roads due to dust being ingested. Ms. McLuckie explained that in years past, there was an increase in URTD near roads; not due to the dust, rather, it may have been caused from people dropping off sick tortoises where they knew other tortoises existed. Shell remains have been observed throughout the Reserve as well, with the highest number of shells being seen in 2003, after the 2002 drought. She reported that URTD was down significantly in 2015.

She mentioned that tortoises are being trans-located to zone four (4), which has been done since 1999. Approximately 460 tortoises have been trans-located to that zone. The majority of tortoises remain in the areas where there are trans-located. She explained that they are able to track them by tagging them in various methods. The most effective method is the pit tag, which is a unique identifier underneath the skin that can be scanned and used to identify each individual tortoise.

She concluded by explaining that Red Hills Parkway was built in 1988 and originally known as Turtle Road. It was expanded in 2012 and as part of that expansion there were five (5) culverts added at various points along the roadway. In 2014, the Fish and Wildlife Service recommended an openness ratio to allow a required amount of light into each culvert, which in turn, would increase use of the culvert for the target species. There are currently two (2) box culverts and three (3) pipe culverts in Red Hills Parkway. Remote cameras were set up at each culvert opening and in a 20 month period over 232,000 photos were captured. The species and type of use was determined by the photos. Approximately 36 species were captured during that time frame.

5. UTILITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

a. St. George City Water Wells- Kade Bringhurst

St. George City Representative Kade Bringhurst presented a photo of a topographical section of land on which St. George City owns two (2) wells; Mill Creek Well Numbers one (1) and two (2). He explained that there was a third well, but it has since been removed due to the BLM transitioning the land it occupied into wilderness area.

Mr. Bringhurst went on to explain that there are two (2) alternate proposed well-sites to replace the pre-existing third site. Currently, a power and water line runs to the former third site. The new proposed site is approximately 500 feet from the old site. Chairman Blake questioned whether the development protocol covered these types of situations and if so, should the determination be referred to the Technical Committee. Mr. Sandberg mentioned that development of new wells and water lines has not been dealt

with before. He stated it would likely need to be brought before the Technical Committee.

There was some discussion as to whether the new site could just be built at the old site. The concern for the alternate site was the environmental impact the hillside would endure.

MOTION by John Bramall to approve forwarding the proposed well site to the Technical Committee, as well as a proposal to add a rain guzzler upon completion for wildlife.

Seconded by Larry Crist.

Discussion:

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Update on land acquisition efforts – Bob Sandberg

Mr. Sandberg mentioned that the BLM has applied for Land and Water Conservation funding under the recreation access clause.

The HCP is working with BLM to develop a Request For Proposal (RFP) for work to be done on the Halls Assessment of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) dikes in regards to restoration, mitigation, and excavation on those sites that are eligible for the National Historic Register. He then stated that the Long Valley Exchange is moving forward as there has been an agreement signed between Washington County and Bob Brennan.

He mentioned briefly that the HCP has been working with UDWR and have applied for ESMF funding and DWR will apply for USFWS Section 6 Land Acquisition Funding. That application is still moving through the process.

He concluded, stating that the Environmental Assessment for the Long Valley Exchange is complete and available for public comment until the 5th of May.

b. Update on permit renewal – Larry/Bob

Larry Crist reported that at the end of March, several representatives from Washington County met with the Regional Director in Denver to discuss the HCP as well as the permit renewal. He reported that there was general agreement for the permit renewal to move forward, with the exception of issues with the Northern Corridor which currently has an unknown status. Henry Maddux reported that the Regional Director will likely visit Washington County in September for the Virgin River program as well as the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve.

c. Technical Committee Report

Cameron Rognan reported on several issues discussed at the recent TC meeting including: the Sentierre Trail project being tabled; an estimation of a heavy fire year and the TC recommending the option of goats to keep the cheat grass down on Cottonwood Road; another trail restoration project involving Southern Utah University helping to restore Pioneer Trails Road; a meeting with law enforcement at Snow Canyon State Park discussing cut fences and other various violations; a University of Las Vegas restoration project; and a successful removal of Tamarisk from the Middleton Wash area.

Mr. Sandberg clarified that the portion of the Middleton Wash area which was cleared of Tamarisk was purchased with Section 6 funding from the Division of Wildlife Resources and is included in the Reserve.

d. HCP Administrator's report- Bob

1. 1st Quarter 2016 report submission

Mr. Sandberg mentioned that the 1st Quarter Report should be reviewed and ready to be discussed at the following meeting.

2. Balance sheet and budget report

The balance sheet showing expenses and revenue currently indicates that the balance is \$100,000 dollars in the red; however, he clarified that at the time the report was printed, no impact fees had been received. The current balance is \$40,000 in the black.

Larry Crist questioned whether impact fees have gone up. Mr. Sandberg stated that they have, mentioning the County Recorder has seen an increase in Recordings of approximately 15%. Mr. Bramall also reported the Realtors Association reported an increase in housing units during the recent years as well.

Mr. Bramall recommended an adjusted journal entry in regards to the impact fees to show that the balance is not always negative.

3. Fire break along Cottonwood Road

Mr. Sandberg clarified that the use of goats will likely not happen this year due to cheat grass not being a sufficient food source. Other options may include the use of inmates or asking the BLM to spray herbicide. It was mentioned that the use of goats were the cheaper option.

4. Hurricane Main Street Trailhead event

Mr. Sandberg reported that the Hurricane Main Street Trailhead and restroom kiosk facility, which is part of Confluence Park, was completed by a grant. The dedication took place on the 16th of April. Mr. Bramall mentioned that Hurricane City was excited to have the trailhead and stated that some trail portions were completed near Grandpa's Pond, which will eventually connect into St. George, Washington, and Springdale Cities.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

This item is reserved for items not listed on this agenda. No action may be taken on a matter raised under this agenda item (three minutes per person).

- a. Susan Crook mentioned that she would like to offer volunteer services on the fire alleviation project. She stated they would be recruiting volunteers to help with seed collection and watering.
- b. Chris Gorzalski mentioned a concern with helicopter use near Sentierre and how that may impact wildlife. Chris Hart stated that he was not aware of any County or Ivins city helicopter use. Mr. Bramall stated it could potentially be military training, which is focused mainly in the Cedar City and Hurricane area, but could possibly be part of the cause.
- c. Lisa Rutherford questioned whether the helicopter use would have to maintain a certain height above ground. It was determined that the BLM would be the best agency to answer questions regarding the helicopter use.

8. **MEMBER REPORTS & REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- a. Marc Mortenson mentioned that approximately 40 St. George City employees cleaned the section of Red Hills Parkway between Bluff Street and 900 East on Earth Day last week. He reported 30 bags of debris were picked up along that area. He went on to mention the Lakes Development, which is a 20 phase, 800 acre planned unit development that he would like to see on a future agenda for discussion.

9. **ADJOURN**

MOTION by John Bramall to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Marc Mortensen.

Discussion: None.

Vote was taken: All voted aye.

Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 PM.
Minutes prepared by Cheyenne Bentley.